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EGYPTIAN THEORY AS APPLIED TO THE 1956  
SUEZ CRISIS

David R. Oliver

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-EGYPTIAN THEORY AS APPLIED TO THE 1956 SUEZ CRISIS

by

D. R. Oliver, Jr.

Submitted to the

School of International Service

of the American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

in

International Studies

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## CHRONOLOGY

Wafd born as political party	1919
Egyptian Communist party accepted by COMINTERN	1922
Communists call for land reform and nationalization of the Canal	1925
Muslim Brotherhood founded	1928
Brotherhood calls for Pan-Islam, branch of movement opened in Syria	1937
Egyptian Prime Minister (Ali Maher) adopts pro (pan)-Arab policy to demonstrate Egyptian freedom from British control	1940
British force King to appoint pro-British Prime Minister	Feb 1942
Nasser collaborates with Brotherhood	1944
Wafd dismissed, Palace rules	Oct 1944
Prime Minister assassinated after declaring war on Axis	Feb 1945
League of Arab States founded	Mar 1945
Brethren establish own companies with workers sharing in the profits	1945
Brethren call for abolition of Treaty of 1936, removal of all British, refusal to negotiate, and elimination of all political parties	1946
Brethren advocate land reform	1947
Aswan High Dam project advanced	Jan 1948
Palestine campaign	May 1948
Brotherhood abolished (first time)	Dec 1948
General Guide (Al Banna) assassinated	Feb 1949
Wafd returns to power	Jan 1950
Martial law lifted	May 1951
1936 Treaty unilaterally aborated by Egypt	Oct 1951





Downtown Cairo burnt	Jan 1952
Free Officer's revolt	23 Jul 1952
Faruk deposed	26 Jul 1952
Wafd cabinet dissolved	8 Sep 1952
Agrarian (land) Reform Law announced	9 Sep 1952
Political parties dissolved (Brethren not included)	16 Jan 1953
Liberation Rally formed	23 Jan 1953
Canal negotiations start	Apr 1953
Monarch abolished and Egypt declared Republic	Jun 1953
Communist party arrests start	Aug 1953
National Guard created	Oct 1953
Brotherhood abolished by Nasser. Communists and Brotherhood make peace	15 Jan 1954
Neguib's coup	23-26 Feb 1954
Nasser makes peace with General Guide and Brotherhood legalized. Communists and Brotherhood split.	26 Mar 1954
Nasser's counter-coup	26-29 Mar 1954
Nasser makes Pilgrimage	Aug 1954
New Canal Treaty signed	19 Oct 1954
Nasser assassination attempt	26 Oct 1954
Brotherhood trials completed	Feb 1955
Iraq and Turkey sign Baghdad Pact	24 Feb 1955
"The" Gaza raid	28 Feb 1955
Bandung Conference	Apr 1955
Russia asked to supply arms	May 1955
Work on Aswan Dam commences	Jun 1955
Sudan pro-Egyptian revolt subdued	Aug 1955
Russian arms deal announced	Sep 1955
Sudan declares independence	Dec 1955



Egypt	izes Red China	May 1956
Last British	soldier leaves Canal	18 Jun 1956
Nasser	elected President	23 Jun 1956
United States	refuses Dam aid	19 Jul 1956
Nasser	nationalizes Canal	26 Jul 1956



The Suez Crisis of 1956 is generally considered a pivotal event by most observers of the international scene. The significance of the occasion appears to be that it brought an era to an end. The Crisis marked the real end of the world power structure that had prevailed during World War II, and promised that there were new voices to be heard. The emptiness of British and French military and political threats was exposed. The dawn (perhaps the premature dawn) of the pre-World War II "underdeveloped" countries as significant world powers was heralded. To those people who are always sympathetic of the underdog and who root for the downtrodden, the Crisis held forth hope of a "fair" tomorrow. At the same time, other, more significant (to the United States) perceptions were being formed. One of the most important was that the Suez Crisis served to demonstrate the United States' commitment to maintaining the status quo in yet another major world wide area (as the Marshall Plan had done for Europe, Korea had done for the Far East, and Vietnam for Indochina). The United States had added another block to the beat of the World's Policeman. Of perhaps equal (and eventually, related) importance was the clear demonstration that the problem of the regional conflict between the Jewish and Islamic states had not been solved by the post-1948 War armistice agreements. One conclusion of the Suez Crisis/War was that obviously Israel did not feel that her present territorial boundaries provided the necessary security she found essential. Concurrently, there seemed little reason to believe that Egypt would hesitate to use the very existence of Israel (in the midst of the Moslem holy land) as a rallying point for the manipulation of her internal political situation. There no longer was any question whether or not the situation between Israel and



Egypt infinitely unstable. At the same time, although in a lower key, at least some of the world had become alerted to the importance of Middle East oil sources to the world economy. The Crisis disruption of the normal flow of oil, the demonstrated weakness of the British position in the area, and the disruption of the (British) economy as a result of the temporary reduction of Middle East oil supplies served to alert some (of the more discerning observers) to the potential world-wide importance of Middle East conflicts, and at the same time, it became obvious to some that the question of support for Israel might become of more than mere ideological interest for the industrialized nations of the West. Could the West continue its battle with the East without the oil of the Middle East? Could the West have the oil and Israel too?<sup>1</sup>

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Such a critical period provides an irresistible attraction for commentators of all ideological color, and the Suez Crisis has received the attention it demands. Scholars and reporters have attempted to describe and explain the events as they saw/interpreted them. Many of

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1. More than academic interest in the United States in the status of Middle Eastern oil (on the part of people other than those involved in the production of oil) stems from 1948, when the United States began importing more crude oil and refined products than we were exporting. For example see Bernard Brodie. Foreign Oil and American Security. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Institute of International Studies, 1947).

This interest took a rapid jump in 1956 when it became apparent that Europe was highly susceptible to economic disruption as a result of impediments in the free flow of oil from the Middle East and that future disruptions were very likely. See Harold Lubell. Middle East Oil Crises and Western Europe's Energy Supplies. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963).

That the need for stockpiling of oil, which is essentially a rather difficult (i.e. expensive) item to stockpile, was seen as critical to Europe as a counter to the threat of disruption (an option discussed by Lubell), can be seen by the situation which existed prior to the latest crisis. In early 1973 the United States had only a five day reserve of oil. On the other hand, England had a 105 day reserve, Western Europe had 90 days and Sweden had 120 days reserve oil supplies stowed on national territory. Henry M. Jackson, "Needed: A Manhattan Project on Energy,"





these descriptive accounts lead inevitably to the author attempting, primarily as an afterthought, to link events with the Crisis itself. At the same time, other writers have undisguisably been interested in concentrating on the causal events which they felt were the foundations of the Crisis. Although one would not maintain that simple divisions between the various accounts can be drawn, it does seem that authors have tended to follow one of two major different paths in their analysis. One group seems to accept the principle that nations behave as rational actors. That events can be best explained by picturing the nation as carefully and deliberately determining the course of action which best serves the "national interests," and then proceeding to carry out this decision. This approach provides a convenient yardstick for determining which events are crucial to a decision/action, for the theory ignores those which do not appear rational, that is, do not appear to serve the purpose which the nation has been postulated as intending. This approach is often characterized as macrotheory.<sup>2</sup>

The second major group of interpreters of the Crisis appears to have been more interested in the individual(s) involved in the decision-making of the various international actors. This interest includes the individual's own values, experiences and goals, his organizational, personal and political debts, and the individual interactions of the people involved in the decisionmaking. This theory does not provide any "yardstick" for

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in Sea Power. (July, 1973), pp. 5-10.

2. A school of international relation which Niebuhr is generally credited with initiating and of which Hans J. Morgenthau is the most famous current practitioner. The most critical assumption to the theory is that all nations act rationally, or, in the manner which will accomplish their goals at the least cost. Action which is inefficient (not in the best decision path) is deemed to be non-rational action by definition and is discarded.



deteriorate the importance of a various consideration, but instead insists that the most complex issues often depend on items which the rational actor group has casually thrown out with the garbage.<sup>3</sup> This approach is often termed the microtheoretical approach.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, many of the better authors tend to combine the two approaches, commonly accepting the macrotheorist explanation for events which they feel other authors have "misunderstood."

In addition to this natural tendency to devote the majority of the available pages to correcting misimpressions an author feels others may have fostered, is the particular problem of obtaining information in Egypt during Nasser's regime. At first glance the problem does not appear critical, for there are certainly enough biographies of Nasser. It is when the student wishes to better understand some of the anti-Nasser views (or other Egyptian views), that one becomes aware of the completeness of the censorship Nasser imposed. By making it so difficult to obtain opposing views, and by making himself so available for interviews, Nasser did what can only be described as a superlative job of managing

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3. One thinks of the comments (not too veiled as to their sexual reference) as to the "demands" of "Eden's new wife." Hugh Thomas. Suez. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 37, and similar comments by Mohammed Hassanein Heikal. The Cairo Documents. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 116.

4. Or Governmental Politics model, that assumes "the decisions and actions of governments are international political resultants...(occurring) from compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence." Graham T. Allison. Essence of Decision. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), p. 162. Probably in good part due to the effectiveness of the spokesmen for the theory (Allison, Morton Halperin), the bureaucratic theory is currently in vogue. While the amount of data required to effectively analyze a decision in a bureaucratic manner is so prohibitive as to ensure the model can seldom be applied as an explanatory tool, and the model does not predict in an exact manner, the bureaucratic model does serve a heuristic value by alerting the student and decision-maker to the myriad of considerations which should be understood.



the Egyptian news scene.<sup>5</sup> In the face of this inability to obtain the necessary detail and depth of knowledge about Egyptian bureaucratic considerations, it does not seem at all unexpected that those authors who have been interested in "fully" explaining the Crisis, have been driven in general to accept the rational actor model for Egypt's actions and to

delve into bureaucratic factors only in the cases of those actors who permit (and encourage) the unfettered exchange of information.<sup>6</sup> Since in the case of the Crisis, the Western nations (particularly the United States and then England to a lesser extent) were the actors whose decision-maker's actions were subject to the most public scrutiny, it might be expected that those who dwell on the bureaucratic explanation of the causal events of the Crisis would be inclined (whatever their personal inclination) to concentrate on these two actors to the exclusion of those actors who did not encourage or even permit in-depth journalistic and/or scholarly searching. Thus, in the case of the Crisis, one might adopt a modifier term for the microtheorist, and might retitl

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5. One is struck by the number of "biographies" of Nasser which exist in the English language and the absolute paucity of information on the remainder of the Free Officers or on the bureaucratic conflicts that occurred during the first four years of their reign. On the subject of the strictness of censorship during Nasser's rule, see Keith Wheelock, Nasser's New Egypt. (New York: Praeger, 1960), pp. 22, 35 and 39. For specific comments on Nasser's management of the press see Jean and Simone Lacouture, Egypt in Transition. (New York: Criterion Books, 1958), p. 208, or Robert St. John, The Boss. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 239-240 and 314. For an example of the wealth of new information which seems destined to become available as a result of Sadat's attempts to establish his own political legitimacy (at the expense of some of the followers of Nasser) see Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Anti-Nasser Drive Begins in Cairo," The Washington Post. (25 March, 1974), p. A 17.

6. This inclination in general works to the definite disadvantage of the actor which does not engage in censorship, as "bureaucratic" behavior either "naturally" appears (or can be made to do so very easily) as more sordid (or at least not as self-sacrificing), then the motives of "national interest," for which the rational actor supposedly acts.





school as the micro-internationalist, by which is meant that the authors tend to use microanalysis only on the international (non-Egyptian) scene.

By these definitions, I am trying to pry apart the two major theories in current use to permit the inclusion of a third (which is at least somewhat different), at least in the case of the Suez Crisis of 1956. My hypothesis is that perhaps a major portion of the Suez Crisis can be explained by an approach which is directly opposite to the micro-internationalist--that perhaps the Suez Crisis can be largely explained by concentrating exclusively on Egyptian domestic politics. An important difference between this latter approach and that of the micro-internationalist is that, since Egypt was obviously the major actor in the Middle East at the time of the Suez Crisis, it may be feasible to largely explain the cause of the Crisis with only negligible consideration of external factors. If this is true, we can avoid the distortion which I feel is inherent in any analysis which must deal with rational actor explanations (and those which combine rational actor explanations for some nations with bureaucratic explanations for other nations would appear, at least on the face of it, to be potentially the most distorted of all). For the purpose of labeling, I will term the study of Egyptian domestic politics, as postulated as the primary cause of the Suez Crisis (to the virtual exclusion of external factors), as micro-Egyptian theory.

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Some background to my interpretation of the Suez Crisis appears necessary. Perhaps the best way to present it is to discuss the macro-theoretical and micro-internationalist explanations of the Crisis, so that they may be contrasted to micro-Egyptian theory.

Rational actor explanations start with the history of Western imperialism in Egypt. Originating as an effort in safeguarding the invest-





ments of Europeans in the Egyptian economy, the British interest in Egypt spread to a denial of other power hegemony over this critical link between Europe and the Far East. This (often thinly disguised) control of Egyptian affairs by non-Egyptians was not acceptable in the rise of nationalistic fervor following World War II, but England was reluctant to give up the position of dominance for which she had (in part at least) fought two world wars. Egypt was faced with continued British efforts to maintain and/or reassert their hegemony in the area. Thus Egypt was forced to look to the East for a counterbalancing power to contain the British imperialistic thrusts. This appeal to the East was made feasible because Egypt realized that she did not border a Communist state,

was protected by the Northern Tier, and she was thus fully protected from Communist territorial aggrandizement.

Egypt was also concerned with the threat of Israel. While she felt that Israel was in part the operationalization of British and American imperialistic intrusions into the Middle East, Egypt was willing to reach an accommodation with her if they could do so without becoming isolated in the Arab world. Unfortunately, Israeli continued aggressions against Egypt's territorial integrity convinced Egypt that peace could not be negotiated from a position of military weakness. United States and British failure to provide Egypt defensive arms, in order to pressure Egypt to join in anti-communist pacts,<sup>7</sup> was reluctantly countered by Egypt by the arrangement with Soviet Russia for arms.

Egypt's continued actions taken as an independent state (e.g. the recognition of Communist China) served to convince the Western powers

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7. See J. C. Hurewitz, "Egypt: Military Rule in a Rapidly Changing Society," Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Middle East. Jacob M. Landau (ed.) (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 61.



that Egypt would not again permit imperialistic penetration, and that Egypt was anti-Western in orientation. Faced with these conclusions, the West decided that their aid money could be better spent elsewhere, but justified this conclusion by blaming the unsatisfactory state of the Egyptian economy. Egypt, confronted with this calculated insult, acted to restore her international prestige by nationalizing the Canal.

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England's position with respect to Egypt was bound up in the problems of the British need for access to the remains of their imperial dominion as represented by the oil empire in the Arabian Gulf and the Commonwealth nations Australia and New Zealand. England's economic life was dependent upon her continued cheap access to markets and raw materials so that she could continue her age-old policy of importing raw materials, food (and lately, energy sources) and the exportation of finished products.<sup>8</sup> In this complex trade system, which depended on the free use of traditional sea routes, the Canal had a prominent position. Not only did 85% of the oil-energy which was used to finish the imported raw materials pass through the canal, but also 60-85% of the trade with the aforementioned Commonwealth partners passed through the canal.<sup>9</sup> Unless the untrained Egyptians could operate the Canal as well as the Europeans, the losers would not be the Egyptians (who could and probably would raise the tolls), but the British people. Interwoven with this consideration was the

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8. For example see the description in The World Almanac. (New York: World-Telegram, 1965), p. 347. "Britain imports all of its oil, cotton, rubber, sulphur, four-fifths of its wool, half of its food and iron ore, also certain amounts of paper, tobacco, chemicals. Manufactured goods made from these basic materials have been exported since the industrial age began."

9. Mezerid, A. G. (ed.). The Suez Canal. (New York: International Review Service, February 1957), Appendices K and L, p. 48.



importance of the infrastructure and supplies in the Canal zone to the British military (and thus in some part, diplomatic capabilities) in the area. Although the British had reluctantly agreed not to maintain a military force in the Canal, they had retained both the right to store military supplies there and the right of reentry in the event of conflagration in the area which threatened their vital interests. Additionally, England was not about to give up her strategic position in the area--the Baghdad pact was evidence enough of that.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, Egypt was acting in direct opposition to British interests. Not only was Egypt's brand of nationalism (and their exportation and exhortation thereof) proving to be a disturbing influence in the area, there appeared to be ample evidence that Egypt was trying to substitute her own influence for that of England throughout the area (particularly in Jordan and Iraq).

At the same time, Egypt appeared to be taking advantage of England's reluctance to take unfair advantage of her "great power" powers. Egypt appeared to be using the tools of weak states (i.e. terrorism and propaganda) to force England out of areas which England had a real interest in, and which Egypt did not. There appeared to be the need for England to take decisive action with respect to her recent protectorate.<sup>11</sup>

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10. For a discussion of Britain's refusal to accept the limitations imposed by the deterioration of her position in the Middle East, see G. F. Hudson, "The Great Catastrophe," The Middle East in Transition. Walter Z. Laqueur (ed.). (New York: Praeger, 1958), pp. 115-8.

11. Which was right in line with England's latest actions in the area. In March 1956, they had deported Archbishop Makarios and the Bishop of Kyrenia from Cyprus to the Seychelles for the stated reason of punishment for the officials "terrorist links." The real reason, however, appeared to be Makarios failure to agree to British proposals on Cyprus constitutional plans. Anthony Eden. Full Circle. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), pp. 440-460.





The orthodox explanation of United States Middle East policy discusses United States actions (or non-actions) as the logical result of a simplistic approach to the area in which America carried over ideas from other regions (primarily the Anglo-American special relationship and the need for active anti-Communism efforts on the part of all participants) and applied these (in general, unsuitable) concepts to the Middle East. America was convinced that there was a definite threat to the peace in the form of the communist ideology, and that both the theoretical (a la Kennan) and practical answer to this threat lay in the policy of containment. Since this policy generated the requirement for alliances between the Western nations and all areas which might become subject to communism, and since Egypt's nationalistic policies required that each nation in the Middle East avoid those same "entangling alliances," the policies were bound to generate friction. The United States viewed Egypt's actions as tantamount to asking for assistance (aid) while simultaneously not only refusing to enlist in the worldwide fight against democracy's real enemy, but actually if not aiding, at the very least acting in a manner which served to weaken the Western position. Not only did the Egyptian action appear at the minimum, suspicious, it also had resulted in a rising chorus of reproachments from nations who were not the recipients of as much American aid as Egypt, but who were cooperating fully in the fight against Communism.<sup>12</sup>

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12. For an account of Turkey's displeasure with America's aid policy, see Terrence Robertson. Crisis. (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 44. For succinct phrasing of the problem one can go to Dulles--"do nations which play both sides get better treatment than nations which are stalwart and work with us?" Townsend Hoopes. The Devil and John Foster Dulles. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 337.





The other "great power" which was involved in the Crisis was France, and her policy objectives appear very clear-cut. France was involved in a conflict in Algeria which consumed her every interest.<sup>13</sup> Since there was a plethora of evidence that the war had been initiated with, guided from and resupplied by, Egypt,<sup>14</sup> France had for some time been actively searching for a reason and means of either distracting Egypt from Algeria, or, better yet, teaching her not to meddle in other's affairs.

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The final participant in the Suez Crisis was Israel. A rational examination of her policies quickly arrives at the conclusion that she is totally involved in the question of physical security. During the period 1954-6, Israel was quite concerned that her physical security was

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13. Roy Pierce. French Politics and Political Institutions. (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 44. "Before 1953, French political crises turned principally on domestic policy. After 1953, they turned mainly on overseas policy....The regime foundered...on the rock of Algeria." It is also important to realize France's military commitment in Algeria. Their military troops increased from 83,000 in February 1955 to 250,000 in April 1956, with a rise to 400,000 before the year was over. This was in a nation one-fifth the size of the United States. Alf Andrew Hegroy. Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 79, 174-5 and 190.

14. "(I)n 1952, Ben Bella and Mahsas escaped from prison in Blida. Zirout and Ben Boulaid broke out of their cell in Bone. All somehow got to Cairo, where they joined Ait Ahmed and Mohammed Khider, both of whom had fled Algeria in 1950." Hegroy, op. cit., p. 35. Although the question of Egyptian support (other than moral) is poohpoohed by some authors such as Kenneth Love. Suez, The Twice-Fought War. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), at least one reputable source has acknowledged the validity of at least some of the charges--"Egypt's decision to help the Algerians was taken so that, in Nasser's words 'We will make them need their arms in Algeria so that they will not be able to give them to Israel. We will oblige them to use them far away from us so that they will not be used against us.'" Heikal, op. cit., p. 45.



being undermined, both by the growing success of the economic blockade,<sup>15</sup> and by the relative and real improvement in Egyptian military capabilities.<sup>16</sup> The Fedayeen raids aside, it appeared obvious that Egypt did not intend to live up to the spirit of the armistice agreements. Given that attitude on the part of the Egyptians, and considering the relative size and resource base of the Arab versus Jew alignment, it was in Israel's interests to use military action to neutralize the Sinai Peninsula before the Egyptians had fully assimilated all of their new Russian weaponry.

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When we turn to microtheory, most people begin with England. Most probably this is because England appears as the biggest loser of the Crisis. Her base rights in the Canal zone were lost irrevocably, and her departure from the rest of the Arab world was accelerated, if not initiated by the event. Acting in conjunction with the Israeli's was certain to antagonize those very Middle Eastern governments whose continued friendship was so critical to the British Middle East policy. England had already withdrawn her military presence from the Canal. It was impossible for her to militarily react expeditiously, and it was obvious that England was politically divided on the need for a show of force. Why did she choose this most inopportune occasion to make a stand?

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15. Reference to the extreme effectiveness of the blockade (in many cases they are inadvertent testimonials) are contained in several sources, most notable in Iigal Allon. "The Arab-Israeli Conflict-Some Suggested Solutions," in International Affairs. (40:205-218, April, 1964); David Ben-Gurion. Israel: Years of Challenge. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963); the chapter entitled "Looking to the Future," in Earl Berger. The Covenant and the Sword. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965); and Walter Eytan. The First Ten Years. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), pp. 90-115.

16. For a generally accepted estimate of the balance, see Moshe Dayan. Diary of the Sinai Campaign. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 4 and 5.



Many commentators direct attention to the Prime Minister. They point out his ill health,<sup>17</sup> his experiences with appeasement with Hitler,<sup>18</sup> and the impression that his personal political legitimacy was built on a foundation of accomplishments in the foreign policy area, not the least of which included the Canal Treaty of 1936 which he had signed, and the treaty of 1954 which he had approved and which he had personally defended in Parliament and on the hustings.<sup>19</sup> Other factors which come in for their share of analysis are Conservative party (inter-party) politics which required that a decisive stand be taken,<sup>20</sup> and the public reaction to Egypt's Middle East tactics which had already resulted in the humiliating firing of Glubb Pasha, and were producing a rapid deterioration in the British position in Jordan. At the same time the anti-American feeling

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17. Anthony Nutting. No End of a Lesson. (New York: Potter, 1967) gives particular emphasis to the aspect of Eden's serious problems with his gall bladder during the period before and during the Crisis. One wonders if this is not because if Eden's actions (which were exceedingly evil and foolish in Nutting's view) were due to a character fault which he had before the Crisis, Nutting himself would be tainted since he had politically risen by his close attachment to Eden's coattails.

18. For Eden's description of the period between his 1938 resignation and the beginning of war, see Anthony Eden. The Reckoning. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 3ff. Many authors have extrapolated this experience into a cognitive set which would prove disastrous to his relationship with Nasser. Robertson, op. cit., 38 describes Eden as "particularly sensitive to charges of appeasement. There was in the Conservative party cupboard a skelton named Munich and no one felt its presence more anxiously than the Prime Minister."

19. For a description of the length to which Eden committed himself to defending the treaty on the basis that it did not give away either England's legal position in the Canal or the rest of the Middle East, and for the acrimony of the debate which resulted in the Party Whip resigning from the Party, see Leon D. Epstein. British Politics in the Suez Crisis. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1964), pp. 31-60.

20. Nutting, op. cit., pp. 23ff discusses the economic problems facing England immediately following the election and the Labour Opposition charges of connivance and hesitant action. Epstein, op. cit., p. 62, discusses the background of the Conservative party split over the question of capital punishment.





which resulted from American opposition to British policy in the Gulf area, served to encourage independent British action.<sup>21</sup>

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United States bureaucratic considerations are laid primarily to particular considerations of the Senate and the Secretary of State, although Eisenhower's health is also considered a factor by some.<sup>22</sup> The primary microtheoretical considerations are involved with an analysis of the Secretary of State. His proclivity for the framing of questions in religious contexts and his abiding hatred of Communism are all brought forth and examined to determine their effects upon his actions.<sup>23</sup> At the same time domestic political considerations are not neglected, and attention is drawn to the interest and (perhaps counterbalancing?) lobbies in the Congress which were concerned about continued United States access to Gulf oil. Other Congressional pressures detailed are due to the fact that aid for the Aswan Dam would be an indirect subsidy for a foreign nation to be better able to compete economically with a product (cotton) which several states grew as their large cash crop. In addition, the

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21. Epstein, op. cit., points out a critical aspect of British understanding of the Middle East--"Englishmen had fought in one world war to win the Middle East and the other to hold it. They were surely convinced of its importance....More than elsewhere, the Middle East, even in World War II, had been an area where British arms seemed to have been dominant and decisive. Here the command and the bulk of the forces were not American. The wartime accomplishments were British, and they were considerable." pp. 23-5. Later (p. 55) Epstein notes a basic anti-Americanism in England based on perceived American anti-British, anti-colonial feelings.

22. Hoopes, op. cit., p. 331, attributes at least part of Eisenhower's failure to fight for the case for Aswan aid to his weakened condition caused by his heart attack. Love, op. cit., p. 325, notes Eisenhower's intestinal operation for ileitis.

23. Hoopes, op. cit., p. 315, discusses Dulles' and American feelings as "Communism was evil incarnate, the antithesis of everything free and decent in human affairs." In Hoopes' "God and John Foster Dulles," Foreign Policy, (13, Winter, 1973-4), p. 171, he attributes to Dulles a "self-righteous and apocalyptic style."





problem of the Aswan aid request being out-of-cycle with the normal bureaucratic budget process (and the increased political visibility of the item that would result/had resulted) is attributed by some as the final straw as far as the President was concerned.<sup>24</sup> Others have suggested that bureaucratic trading was involved, and that since the United States had supported ARAMCO against the British on the question of territorial claims to Buraimi, and had refused to put teeth into the Tripartite Declaration, the "special relationship" and our greater interests (NATO harmony) dictated that we follow the British lead in the case of the Aswan aid.<sup>25</sup>

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Bureaucratic explanations of French motives are in large measure just amplification of the macrotheory explanation of the French commitment in Algeria.<sup>26</sup> Given the importance of success in Algeria to both foreign and domestic policies this does not seem infeasible.

Concurrent factors which affected French reactions (although not to the same extent) and considerations of the French identification with and

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24. Nasser had delayed his decision on the aid until any appropriations would have to be approved via a supplemental budget request, a tricky enough item to maneuver through Congress on the most neutral of issues, much less on one upon which the Senate Appropriations Committee had already taken a public stand against. See pp. 323-4 of Hussein, *op. cit.*

25. For this "horse-trading" explanation see Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

26. Some indications of the French commitment were that the Algerian Parliament was dissolved in April 1956, in June the first Algerian rebels were executed (Heggoy, *op. cit.*, p. 173) and the resident minister began to rule by decree (p. 183). Finally, in October, Ben Bella was captured while he was under a safe-conduct pass (Nutting, *op. cit.*, pp. 100ff).



investment in Egypt,<sup>27</sup> discussions on the condition of the French armed services' morale,<sup>28</sup> and discussions of the French citizen's identification with the Israeli government experiment.<sup>29</sup>

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Israel offers a fertile field for microtheory analysis. Scholars have identified as critical Israel's loss of diplomatic power, which required her to subsequently rely on military power;<sup>30</sup> the failure of the

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27. More than 200,000 Frenchmen were shareholders in the Suez Canal. Which means that practically every Frenchman knew someone who was affected by the Nationalization. For one discussion of this effect see Terence Robertson. Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy. (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. xiii.

28. The French military had suffered an ignominious defeat in the Second World War, and a political one in Vietnam two years previously. They had been involved in a civil war in Algeria since 1952. Most authors imply that the military would like a short, easy involvement which they could win decisively for a change.

29. As a fellow socialistic country which was itself being harrassed by the same nation (Egypt) that was snapping at French heels in Algeria. It seems worth noting, however, that French anti-semiticism had been the reason for the birth of the modern Zionist movement (see Leslie Derfler, The Dreyfus Affair. (Boston: Heath, 1963)), and there was surely no problem after the death of the Fourth Republic two years later in turning French policy toward Israel completely around.

30. Israel's deterioration with Russia during the years 1947-54 is done well by Yaacov Ro'i. "Soviet-Israeli Relations," in The U.S.S.R and the Middle East. M. Confino and S. Shamir (eds.). (New York: Wiley, 1972), pp. 123-141. Israel's deterioration in relations with the United States probably can be attributed to the State Department asserting the primacy of its considerations of American investments in the area, particularly in the absence of strong executive pressure for Israel. An excellent discussion of the anti-Israeli set of British public opinion as a result of the British Mandate experience is contained in Christopher Sykes. Crossroads to Israel. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1964). For example--"the daily abominations of the Jewish terrorists had embittered thousands of them (English troops) against the whole Yishuv. This was part of the price that innocent Jewish men and women had to pay for the (Jewish) Agency's needless act of desperation in combining with these repulsive secret societies and refusing to cooperate in their suppression." (p. 333).



United Nations to prove effective in the Middle East;<sup>31</sup> and the failure of a moderate Israeli government to achieve a settlement.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the internal politics of Mapai and the Histadrut are seen as important,<sup>33</sup> as are the personal perceptions of the Prime Minister and the Army Chief of Staff.<sup>34</sup>

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31. Israel had herself acted in complete disregard of United Nations' directives during the second truce period of the 1948 war, mounting attacks again and again in order to secure desirable territory. In 1951, it was Egypt's turn as she ignored the United Nations Resolution S/2208/Rev. 1 which was "calling upon" Egypt to end her illegal restriction of goods to/from Israel via the Canal. Another resolution, introduced into the Security Council in 1954, and directed toward the same end, was vetoed by Russia. A discussion of these matters and all other United Nations actions is contained in Fred J. Khouri. The Arab-Israeli Dilemma. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968). Particular references to the above can be found on pp. 84-95, 207 and 372.

32. During Sharett's fifteen months in office Israel's diplomatic position had deteriorated, border transgressions had continued, trade deficits had increased, and worse of all, the Israeli army had been at the minimum, embarrassed, and probably seriously weakened by the public denouncements resulting from the Lavon affair. One of the better discussions of the ramifications of the latter is contained in Shabtai Teveth. Moshe Dayan. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), pp. 227-231, 290, 296-300, and 305-6.

33. See the above (#32) discussion on the Lavon Affair. Also Peter Y. Hedding, Mapai in Israel. (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), especially pp. 261-298 for a discussion of the conflict between the charismatic and the party.

34. One might propose that one way to explain Dayan's rapid (and undeserved?) rise in Israel/Mapai was because he shared with his mentor (Ben-Gurion) a cognitive theory about the military ease with which the Arabs could be routed, an opinion which had been formed by Dayan's first combat experience, when during the Battle for the Deganias "I saw how they dropped everything and fled...they were at a total loss. With our fourth shell the entire Syrian attack collapses. They retreated without being attacked....I thought then that you just have to bang once on a tin and they will all scatter like birds." This experience was then reinforced in his engagement at Lydda. Teveth, op. cit., pp. 143 and 151-2.





Before returning to my micro-Egyptian theory, it is necessary to acquire a cognitive set which will support this explanation. It is thus essential to discuss some Egyptian history in order to develop some aspects that many authors either disregard or denigrate. Of course, in discussing the events of 1952-1956, which are of primary importance with regard to the Crisis, it is necessary to deal with some history which is even earlier. While it is obviously important, I think one can simply accept that Egypt was under foreign domination for about 2500 years before the Free Officer's revolt, and that the British domination, beginning in about 1882, was only the latest of a long history of occupation. The first significant event for my purposes is the forming of the Wafd political party as an outgrowth of the efforts of Sa'd Zaghlul to form a delegation and receive British permission to present Egypt's case for independence to the nations at the Paris Peace Conference following World War I. The importance of this event was at least three-fold. In the first place it became obvious that the British could be subjected to successful terrorism, for their initial refusal and subsequent capitulation after a few British citizens were killed was not the action of a strong occupier. Secondly, the Egyptians were successful in their strategy of appealing to "world opinion" to deliver them from a situation they could not surmount themselves.<sup>35</sup> And finally, Zaghlul's success in ending the Egyptian legal position as a British protectorate in 1922 and the gaining of a Constitution in 1923 firmly established the Wafd as the party of Egyptian nationalists. The continued success of this party, which had no ideology except nationalism and which appealed to the entire spectrum of Egyptian citizenry sufficiently to remain the largest vote

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35. See Lacouture, op. cit., pp. 86-96, especially 88-9.



getter in every election throughout the three decades of Egyptian constitutional government, must be considered as a statement of the overriding interest of the Egyptian people throughout the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup>

The second event I consider particularly significant was the application and acceptance of the Egyptian Socialistic Party to the COMINTERN in 1922. After a quick name change (to the Egyptian Communist Party), the second major party which would last until the revolt of 1952 appeared. In what was the forerunner of legitimate political calls for land reform, the Communists called for limiting the largest individual landowner to a maximum of 100 feddan (there is about one acre per feddan). At the same time, they called for nationalization of the Suez Canal.<sup>37</sup>

A note is appropriate at this point. Hopefully my purpose is already blatantly apparent. I am struck by the apparent "naturalness" of the actions which the Free Officers took in the 1950s. I am convinced that Nasser was, practically completely, a product of his time and the Egyptian experience. In this context, I would like to trace the main political ideas which entered the 1950s (without Nasser) in order to determine whether or not Nasser developed new, legitimate, political aspirations as a result of the international scene (i.e. due to the

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36. For a history of the Wafd's political predecessor and other early Egyptian political parties, see Jamal Mohammed Ahmed. The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), especially pp. 114-115. The support for the Wafd declined for reasons that will be apparent, but there was still sufficient support in the 1949 elections for the Wafd to receive the largest per cent (40%) of the vote cast. Anouar Abdel-Malek. Egypt: Military Society. (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 29.

37. Walter Z. Laqueur. Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), pp. 34-35. For some of the better discussions of various aspects of Land Reform, see Abdel-Malek, op. cit., pp. 50-86; Wheelock, op. cit., pp. 74-108 and Gabriel Baer, "Egyptian Attitudes Towards Land Reform, 1922-1955," The Middle East in Transition. Laqueur, op. cit., pp. 80-92.



actions of other nations), or whether there already existed a set of Egyptian political goals to which Nasser had to subscribe in order to remain in power.<sup>38</sup> Thus I am interested in tracing and in determining the legitimacy of the land reform movement, the question of what the Canal's status should be, the Egyptian attitude toward the Western and Eastern powers, the strength of the pan-Arab movement, and various other, perhaps less significant, political goals. In addition, for purposes which will be apparent later, I am interested in determining whether or not there were legitimate political movements established in Egypt, and if so, what their platforms were and what was the extent of their public support.

The next important event is dated from about 1928. This is the formation of the Moslem Brotherhood. To fully appreciate the strength that the Brotherhood movement later acquired, it is necessary to touch on the historical reaction of the Islamic culture to the successful encroachments of the West. When forced to evaluate the apparent superiority of the Western civilization (in comparison to his own), the Moslem was practically limited to three reactions. He could advocate the elimination of the influence of Islam upon the culture (secularization) and propose the adoption of Western modes of thought and actions (a la Ataturk); he could attempt to live with both the Islamic religion and Western ideas simultaneously, a sort of partial secularization, which required each individual to accept many contradictions in his daily life, and generally produces a lessening of the faith as individuals tended to rationalize their own lives; or the Moslem could advocate a renewal of faith and a purging of society of the effects of the foreign contamination which had

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38. What is the phrase about "There go the masses, I must catch them for I am their leader."?





been experienced. For the Moslem who was strongly attracted by the spiritual message, and who had seen no tangible results from the other policies, the latter appeared as the only possible alternative.<sup>39</sup> It was in this fertile ideological field that the self-help religious movement known as the Moslem Brotherhood took root. The Brotherhood called for a rededication to the teachings of the Prophet, for a removal of all foreign (British) presence from the country, and for the improvement of each Egyptian through community cooperative programs. Even though the movement appeared to be a reaction of the times, it also was immeasurably aided by the personal magnetic charisma of its founder and initial leader (Hasan al-Banna).<sup>40</sup> Under al-Banna's driving personal leadership, the

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39. "The ideologies of the West must be resisted: they are the forward arm of corruption....Islam...is sufficient in itself for the renaissance of the nation." Richard P. Mitchell. The Society of the Muslim Brothers. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 232. Ahmed, op. cit., p. xi notes that "The Muslim Brothers challenged the fundamental assumption of the historical development of modern Egypt: the assumption that there is a unified modern civilization, called into existence by Western Europe, and that Egypt must form part of it."

40. For descriptions of Al Banna which are inevitably highly flattering, regardless of the author's opinion of the Brotherhood as a religious and/or political movement, see Christina Phelps Harris. Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt. (London: Mouton & Co., 1964); J. Heyworth-Dunne. Religious and Political Trends in Modern Egypt. (Washington: By the Author, 1950); Ishak Musa Husaini. The Moslem Brethren. (Beirut: Khayats, 1956); and Mitchell, op. cit. While the Harris book is often cited as an authoritarian work on the subject, the Mitchell book is much more complete and balanced, while the Heyworth-Dunne book is not tainted by later efforts (post-Nasser's coup or assassination attempt) to either prove or disprove a particular point about the Brotherhood. The Husaini book was in large part written prior to 1952, and no section was written later than 1955, so it was not affected by the climatic events of the last part of that year and the beginning of the next.





Brotherhood grew rapidly<sup>41</sup> and by 1937 branches of the movement were being formed in other Islamic countries. It is of particular interest to realize that the first such branch was formed in Syria (Damascus).<sup>42</sup> Simultaneously the ideological call for pan-Islamism was broadcast by the Brotherhood throughout the Middle East.

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41. Accurate figures on Moslem Brotherhood membership are not available, but estimates by several authorities are in rough agreement and emphasize the significance of the movement. In a country of only twenty million people, in the late 1940s, the Brotherhood claimed 500,000 active members and an equal number of sympathizers. This was equivalent to more than 35% of the total vote cast in the 1949 elections, and is indicative of the Brotherhood's dominant position in Egyptian politics in the early years of Nasser's reign. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 328ff. See Abdel-Malek, op. cit., p. 29, for the total 1949 vote count.

42. Husaini, op. cit., p. 75. Egypt's ties to Syria early in the Nasser regime may have been at least in part based upon the Moslem relationship. Some indication of both that and the closeness of the relationship between the two countries is seen by the fact that the first ambassador to Syria after the Coup was General Neguib's brother, 'Ali. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 154. For the comments of another author on the relationship of the Egyptian pan-Arabic movement and the Moslem religion see Nadav Safran. Egypt in Search of Political Community. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 256-7. "In Egypt the idea of a union of the Arab countries had its roots in a religious motive. The first serious consideration of such an idea took place in 1924-1925, in the course of the agitation over restoring the caliphate, which had just been abolished by Ataturk...the proposal was revived time and time again with the encouragement of the king, who expected it to bring him not only an enlarged realm, but enlarged powers as well. Each time, however, the idea of an Arab caliphate was resisted by the Wafd and the other nationalist parties on the grounds of principle as well as of party self interest. In the meantime, the promotion of the cause of an Arab union preliminary to a Muslim union was taken up by independent popular organizations, such as the Association of Muslim Youth and the Muslim Brotherhood. During the Second World War, propitious political circumstances in the Levant, the encouragement of the British, the spread of the idea of an Arab union along with the growth of the Brotherhood, and the fear that the king might take the initiative himself, induced the Wafdist government to abandon its negative attitude and to seek some form of Arab cooperation that would satisfy the growing pan-Arab pressure without sacrificing Egypt's sovereignty and its own constitutional order. The result was the pact of the Arab League...(and) the United Arab Republic ....Behind this commitment there was the same combination of driving forces...a broad, popular, religious-inspired sense of Muslim solidarity which is given outward expression in secular and political terms by the



While the following comments are out of historical order, it seems reasonable to digress at this point to discuss events which drastically weakened the Brotherhood before Nasser's revolt, and which probably assisted Nasser in politically outmaneuvering the Brotherhood during the 1950s. The critical event for the Brotherhood was the assassination of their charismatic General Guide in 1949.<sup>43</sup> The succession conflict within the Brotherhood resulted in the all-too-common experience of a splintering of the Brotherhood leadership and the election of a very weak, politically compromised leader who did not possess a political "sense."<sup>44</sup> This outcome of the succession problem immeasurably weakened the Brotherhood, and made them ready prey to anyone (or any organization) which was willing to play off against each other different leaders who aspired to be the General Guide.

Returning to the historical chronology, and recalling that the Brotherhood had just issued a call for pan-Islamism within the Arab world, it seems significant that only three years later, a logical

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leaders of the country."

43. For which no culprit was ever found, but since it was done in retaliation for an assassination of a Prime Minister which had been credited (probably incorrectly) to the Brotherhood, one is suspicious of the Government's motives. It is noteworthy that when Nasser wished to mend fences with the Brotherhood in 1954, he simply reopened the government's investigation.

44. For a discussion of the personalities in the fight for leadership, see Mitchell, op. cit. For a discussion of the personality of the compromise candidate, Hasan Ismail Hudaybi, and a description (without discussion) of his fatal weaknesses, Husaini, op. cit., pp. 113ff. Some of his weaknesses were that he was related by marriage to the Royal family, and by friendship to members of the Palace political contingency. He was a definite member of the status quo having been a judge for nearly three decades, and his health was very poor, leading to later mental deterioration. Other weaknesses became apparent during his tenure, and it was obvious that he was lacking in appreciation for the firmness of decision the conflict with the Free Officer's required, but that was not a consideration for the moment.



extension of this call for regional mutual cooperation was sounded under the title of pan-Arabism. The initiator of this call was none other than the Egyptian Prime Minister (Ali Mather). It is significant to note that authors generally attribute his advocacy of the concept of pan-Arabism as an attempt to demonstrate to the other Arab countries that Egypt could establish a foreign policy separate from the influences of the British. Since British presence and control was common throughout the Middle East (at that time), Mather's call for pan-Arabism and his strong pose as the champion of Arab rights was not only a not-too-subtle call for Arab nationalism, it also was an example of an Egyptian leader attempting to divert attention from domestic acquiescence to foreign domination, by mounting a verbal assault on the same domination present in other area countries.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately for this pose, increased British requirements for security due to the war effort resulted in a stifling of these Egyptian efforts. The conclusion of this era was when the British used military force to obtain Mather's dismissal in 1942. While this action (or at least the result of this action) was seen by the British as an essential part of their elimination of overt Axis sympathy, with Rommel at the gates of Egypt,<sup>46</sup> the event is credited by many Egyptian patriots as providing the spark that ignited the flame of

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45. For a formulation of this particular theory see Heyworth-Dunne, op. cit., p. 26. For a discussion of the British intentions in the encouragement of the establishment of the Arab League, see Elie Kedourie, "Pan-Arabism and British Policy," Laqueur, Transition. op. cit., pp. 108-110.

46. For some discussion of the increasing anti-British actions in Egypt as Rommel appeared more certain of victory, see Jean Lacouture. Nasser. (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp. 47-9.





successful revolution.<sup>47</sup> It was, in fact, less than two years later that Nasser, as representative of the dissident elements in the Army, began to collaborate with the Muslims in order to coordinate their common efforts to thwart the British and establish real Egyptian independence.<sup>48</sup>

The real importance of the events of 1942, however, appears to be in the damage they were to the Wafd. The Wafd, in their eagerness for political power, had permitted themselves to be the object which was forced upon the Egyptian people by British bayonets. The Wafd thus lost an irreplaceable portion of their identification with pure Nationalism in the minds of the Egyptian people.<sup>49</sup> Their giving up of this position thus permitted other groups to appropriate "some of the center." And, perhaps even more importantly, the diminishment of the Wafd, the feeling that "The Wafd was no longer the Delegation representing the unanimous will of the nation. It was now nothing more than a political party,"<sup>50</sup> permitted the increased identification of the Brotherhood as the most

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47. See Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Philosophy of the Revolution. (Buffalo: Smith, Keyes & Marshall, 1959), p. 29, and Anwar El Sadat. Revolt on the Nile. (New York: The John Day Company, 1957), p. 22. S. E. Finer. The Man on Horseback. (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 65, sees "the British coup de force against the king in 1942" as half of the essential wounding of the army's pride (the other being their failure in 1948 against the Jews) which was necessary to build "a disposition to intervene" mood in the army. The extent of the pro-Axis sympathy in Egypt is difficult to exaggerate. Perhaps the best historic example of this attitude is the assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister in the Parliament when he had the "audacity" to declare war on the Axis powers in February 1945.

48. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 24ff, discusses Sadat and other's cooperation and coordination with the Wafd. On page 97, he details similar direct discussions between Nasser and the Brotherhood.

49. Lacouture, Transition, op. cit., pp. 97-104. In a later book (Nasser, op. cit.) Lacouture terms 1942 as "a doubly important date: the army, animated so far by essentially corporate if not conservative ambitions, awoke to national consciousness; and the Wafd was ruined as the incarnation of the national aspirations." p. 49.

50. Lacouture, Transition, op. cit., p. 99.



legitimate actor which had not been tarnished by participation in non-nationalistic policies.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the Wafd may have been better able to resist the attacks of the Free Officers in the 50s if the Wafd had not so damaged itself by its support of the West during the war years.

It was also during the war years that the Palace took a renewed interest in politics, an interest which would remain through the rest of the forties, and which must identify the palace as another of the political actors/parties/pressure groups on the Egyptian political scene. One significance of the palace as a political group is that it was the only power (acting through the King's constitutional right to dismiss the Prime Minister) which would keep the Wafd out of power (by not accepting the Wafdists and encouraging the coalition of splinter parties). The success of the palace in excluding the Wafdists from power beginning in 1944 until the general election of 1950 resulted in two primary effects; the political instability of a minority government encouraged even more dissidence than that which had produced a new government an average of every eighteen months since the enactment of the constitution,<sup>52</sup> secondly, in the desire of the palace for power, the palace succeeded in entangling the King in the same tarbaby with which the Wafd had sat down. This is, despite the King's hatred of the British, by

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51. "With the end of the war, the Wafd's haste to establish leadership in the national movement was in part an attempt to alter its image of collaboration with the British. It was also partly due to traditional Wafdist enthusiasm when out of power; but especially to the challenge flung at the Wafd by the Muslim Brothers. That group had seriously eaten into traditional Wafdist strongholds: the university, the civil service, and the countryside; and their new prestige and power boded ill for the Wafdist conflict with the palace." Mitchell, op. cit., p. 38.

52. Actually that is a 1923 to 1952 average. See John S. Badeau, "A Role in Search of a Hero," Middle East Journal. (Autumn, 1955, No. IX, pp. 373-384), p. 377.



permitting palace governments which favored close collaboration with the British, whether necessary or not, to rule, the King lost his identification with nationalism and therefore lost his political legitimacy.

As the war served to loosen the identification of the King and the Wafd with Nationalism, and thus served to divorce them from the mainstream of Egyptian political thought, there was opened an excellent opportunity for the development of new political movements which could take advantage of this opening. The Brotherhood (or Al-Banna) became convinced of the need (and the opportunity) of the Brotherhood to become politicalized. In what proved to be either a fortunate set of circumstances, or else demonstrated the General Guide's "feel" of the pulse of the time, the Brotherhood was "bought-off" by the Wafd and "held-off" by the palace, so that they were not permitted to join either the government or the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>53</sup> While the Wafd and palace were unwilling to be forced into a position of politically competing with the well-organized and powerful Brotherhood for the nationalistic vote, the result was that the Brotherhood was the only major political movement that managed to escape political identification with the British during the turmoil of the war years.

The Moslem Brotherhood had not lost its desire to begin contributing to the political process, however, and in 1946 they adopted a public platform of their goals. Of major interest in the platform were the calls for abrogation of the Canal treaty of 1936, for removal of all British (and other foreigners) from the country, for a refusal to negotiate any new treaty with the British for the use of the Canal (the

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53. See Heyworth-Dunne, op. cit., p. 40, for description of events in 1942, see Mitchell, op. cit., p. 33, for comments on this and the 1945 "elections--believed to have been among the more obviously dishonest held in Egypt."





Brotherhood was now wavering being advocating internationalization and nationalization and for the elimination of all political parties. The reasoning involved in the latter principal is perhaps not patently obvious, particularly in retrospect,<sup>54</sup> but it is explained by Husanini:

"among their political principles was the abolition of all Egyptian political parties. They held that these parties were brought into existence by particular circumstances and motives which were, for the most part, personal, and not for the general good.... They are all alike...their greediness to take over the government....party politics spoil all aspects of the life of the people....The effective cure...is the abolition of all parties, since they have outlived their function..."<sup>55</sup>

It is also noteworthy that the Brotherhood did not consider themselves to be a political party, and the public did not so identify them.

By 1946 the Moslem Brotherhood was able to present tangible evidence of their dedication to social reform, for they had an operating system of industries which used Egyptian management and labor, and in which each worker had a share of the profits from the capital investment.<sup>56</sup> Within the course of the following year the Brotherhood was able to present their own program of land reform, a program which argued against absentee ownership and large acreage farms, in addition to calling for the distribution of public lands. The impact of this position upon the country

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54. In 1952 the Brotherhood and Nasser combined to insist on this initial step in political reform (Mitchell, op. cit., p. 110). As will be related, this elimination of political opposition proved to be much more to Nasser's advantage than to the Brotherhood's.

55. Husanini, op. cit., p. 66. For additional descriptions of Brotherhood social reform goals, see Mitchell, op. cit., p. 272ff.

56. See Husanini, op. cit. p. 56, and also Harris, op. cit., p. 150.





perhaps can be assessed by noting the great lengths that the (palace) government went to provide a counterbalancing "religious" opinion.<sup>57</sup>

Postwar Egypt was a sea of discontent. The political parties (the palace, the Wafd and the Brotherhood) were either trying to make up for their past errors (consorting with the British during the war in the case of the first two) or trying to consolidate their gains. The war had greatly disrupted the cotton market (permanently it would turn out). The budget, and the balance between imports and exports were nothing less than chaotic.<sup>58</sup> The cost of living was spiraling along with the numbers of unemployed,<sup>59</sup> and the Army had been humiliated (again, remembering 1942) by their performance against the Jews. In January 1948, Adrian Daninois had presented a plan for the High Dam, but his plan for the development "entirely in Egypt and under Egypt's full sovereignty" of the total Nile basin waters was lost in the general confusion.<sup>60</sup> As the level of terrorism increased the palace used the opportunity to dissolve the Brotherhood. This led directly to the assassination of the

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57. Heyworth-Dunne, pp. 51 and 94. Al-Banna proposed "that the individual should own as much land as he can cultivate, and that the residue should be given to the landless, free of charge."

58. Charles Issawi, Egypt in Revolution. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 52, contains this specific assessment.

59. Wilton Wynn. Nasser of Egypt. (Cambridge: Arlington Books, 1959), p. 38, describes the Egyptian economic situation during the post-war period. This book, along with Wheelock's, op. cit., are probably the two most critical analyses of the early Nasser regime. By critical, I do not necessarily mean biased, but most of the authors start with the assumption that Nasser was a combination of the Savior and Richard the Lion-Hearted. These two authors are in favor of Nasser's actions in general, but are willing to discuss some of the less "ideal" events.

60. Tom Little. High Dam at Aswan. (New York: The John Day Company, 1965), p. 32. He notes that the real importance of the Dam "lay in the fact that it would "buy" time for development because during the first ten years of construction, for the first time since the first decade of this century, Egypt would at least not get poorer in terms of agricultural production." p. 39.



Prime Minister and the counter-assassination of the General Guide. In this general tenor of violence the palace finally decided to give up their attempts to keep the Wafd out of power. In late 1949 Egypt's last democratic election was held. The Wafd returned to power and shortly thereafter martial law was lifted, the Brotherhood was again legalized, and one million feddans of land were distributed to the fellahs.<sup>61</sup> In the general relaxed atmosphere that resulted, the Wafd extended its power, but its members soon returned to corruptive practices.<sup>62</sup> When public disfavor mounted the Wafd Prime Minister (Nahas) sought to restore his government to public favor by taking a popular stand on the principal public issues. Accordingly, in October 1951, he unilaterally abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium on the Sudan. While this announcement did generate general rejoicing and restored his government's shaky condition, he had not succeeded in completely appropriating the "Egyptian middle-of-the-road" position. There was still the question of whether or not he could carry out his declaration.<sup>63</sup> By late January 1952, it was apparent that the British (now 80,000 strong in the Canal Zone) were not going anywhere right away, and it appears that the Brotherhood, the Communists and the palace siezed

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61. Wynn, op. cit., pp. 36ff, for a discussion of the events of "the last days of King Farouk." Also see Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 58, for a description of the same events from the Moslem perspective. See Abdel-Malek, op. cit., p. 41, for discussion of the land distribution.

62. See Wynn, op. cit., p. 38.

63. It is interesting to note that the General Guide (Hudaybi) demonstrated his complete lack of political sense at this time by visiting the palace and letting himself be interpreted (by a press interview) as supporting the King and the Wafdist policies. This served to weaken the Brotherhood's image at a critical (November 1951) period. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 90.



the popular revulsion at the Dinshawai incident<sup>64</sup> as an opportunity to demonstrate their strength. The method chosen resulted in the burning of downtown Cairo (Black Saturday), an event that horror-struck most foreign observers, but which, in the context of Egyptian politics, had two very important results. First, the riot was effective in demonstrating that the Wafd could no longer form a legitimate government. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the King had to call on the army to disperse the mob from the Palace and to restore order in the streets. The historical precedent of civilian authority being forced to rely on the Army to maintain order and thus providing the army with derivative legitimacy seems well documented in other Middle East nations,<sup>65</sup> and Black Saturday may well have provided the Free Officer's with the last necessary condition for a successful revolt.

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Within six months the latest (and last) Egyptian political actor had appeared on the scene--the army--in the form of the Free Officers. On 23 July of 1952, their revolt had succeeded (one tends to include the phrase, beyond their wildest dreams), and Egypt was presented with yet another political group that had no ideology.<sup>66</sup> The initial success

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64. The "incident" occurred during a period of increased Egyptian terrorist attacks upon the Canal which were intended to force the British to acknowledge that a new treaty was desirable. Egyptian troops, who were forbidden to be armed with anything other than staves, were ordered to give up their arms. On the orders of their government they refused. In the resulting military confrontation, about 50 fatalities were experienced by the Egyptian forces.

65. The best discussion of the fallacies in the policy of relying on the armed forces as a legitimizer (that they thus become legitimized as actors themselves in domestic politics) is contained in J. C. Hurewicz, Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension. (New York: Praeger, 1969), particularly comments on pp. 18, 112, and 124.

66. Neither the Wafd nor the Brotherhood had an ideology which was essential to their political legitimacy.





seems to be, at least in part, due to the general feeling that, given the conditions of civil unrest, the army's intervention might well provide a breathing space for everyone. In the follow-through of their revolt, the Free Officers required King Farouk to abdicate, thus removing the source of their own frustration.<sup>67</sup> They then began to evaluate the situation.

Before continuing with the remainder of the chronology, I would like to discuss a theory, or perhaps just a possibility, as to the nature of Gamal Abdel Nasser's thought processes. It does not seem unreasonable to come to the conclusion that he was a very intelligent man, with a great deal of self-confidence, and with a great deal of knowledge of practical politics. As at least partial proof of these assumptions, it seems only necessary to note that Nasser produced a

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67. I think one can make the case that the King was blamed by the army for their disgrace in 1942 (we would have rescued him if he had called upon us), and for the 1948 disgrace (when he permitted friends to supply the army with defective arms and insisted on fighting even when the army wasn't prepared to fight). On the last point, Wheelock, op. cit., reports that "Five days before the Arab armies marched into Palestine, several army officers, including Brigadier Mohammed Naguib, submitted a report to Prime Minister Mahmoud Nokrashy; the report showed conclusively that Egypt was not prepared to fight." p. 7.

George M. Haddad, Revolutions and Military Rule in the Middle East. (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1973), p. 22, indirectly supports the view of the King's removal as the primary goal of the revolt when he discusses the statement Sadat made following the successful actions of the 23rd. "The statement was an apology for the military takeover and showed primarily the military motives behind the officers' action and their concern about the army's reputation. It spoke of the bribery, corruption, and government instability that had a great influence on the army and contributed to defeat in the Palestine War."

For what may have been the last straw to some, see P. J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), n. 66, as he describes events of 22 July 1952, when the King "insisted on appointing his brother-in-law, Colonel Ismail Sherine, as Minister of War, a choice hardly acceptable to the army officers. Ismail Sherine's 'honorary' rank had been bestowed on him when he married Fawzia, one of the King's sisters. He had never attended the Military Academy, and he had no known qualifications for the appointment other than his relation to the monarchy. This open affront to the army spurred the Free Officers to action on July 23."



successful conspiracy by melding in diverse elements, and by patient building (and adapting) for several years.<sup>68</sup> It also seems at least not unreasonable to propose that his personal proclivity for conspiracy was simply his own method of exercising political action.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, I propose that the description of Nasser as purely a "reactive" individual is very misleading and was adopted by many observers in order to both escape the necessity for assessing Nasser with any responsibility for the excesses or ill effects of his actions (if he is just reacting, all the blame can be placed upon his opponents), and similarly can escape the (normal) necessity of explaining Nasser's intentions.<sup>70</sup> When there is an individual with the intelligence and political sense to rise to the top of an organization of men who were interested in power, and then, against all opposition, for almost two decades, in the midst of

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68. Wynn, op. cit., p. 32, "In developing the Free Officers Committee, Nasser displayed remarkable conspiratorial skill. He refused to allow minor doctrinal differences to hamper the movement, and it was his patience and restraint which prevented his young colleagues from making a disastrous premature bid for power. Nasser pulled together young officers who represented a wide range of political ideology..."

This description of Nasser is rather typical and others of the same ilk are easily found.

69. For example, the security system reported by Wynn, op. cit., p. 62, "In addition to the normal intelligence services of the army and Ministry of Interior, Nasser has a General Intelligence Administration answerable directly to him. Within his administration are four separate systems, no one of which has any contact with the other. They report directly to Nasser and hence act as a check on one another."

In the same vein, a comment which indicates both Nasser's conspiratorial bent and the violence in Egyptian politics, is in St. John, op. cit., p. 199, "(T)he reporters discovered that Nasser was the best-guarded man in Bandung: he had brought eight personal bodyguards with him to supplement the white-helmeted Indonesian troops..."

70. This acceptance by many sophisticated reporters of Nasser's poor-mouthing of himself as only a "reacting" individual should be retained in history as one of the great put-ons of all time. At the same time, this concept provided a good way of rationalizing that all bad events in the Middle East were the fault of the West, and supplied an intellectual(!?) reason for rooting for the underdog.



the most unstable social conditions which Egypt had ever seen, could maintain himself as the leader until he died in bed, it does not seem consistent to maintain that this was not a planning and calculating individual.<sup>71</sup>

There is another alternative that should be considered. Is it unreasonable to expect that Nasser was an aware viewer of the Egyptian political scene? As I hope to have already made clear, there were specific political issues of Egyptian politics that were basic to the educated individual's daily life. Therefore, given Nasser's personal view that the future of social reform in Egypt depended upon the Free Officers' continuation in power, does it seem unreasonable to suppose that, while he may not have publically (or privately) verbalized his thought processes, he nevertheless considered, evaluated and acted in a political manner that was necessary to maintain his regime (and himself) in power? I do not think this is unreasonable nor do I know of any information in the public domain which tends to refute this proposition.

Given the conclusion that one of the primary considerations involved in Nasser's decisions was how to best maintain the power position of the Free Officers, the events from 1952 to 1956 appear rather consistent. As an overall view, it appears evident that Nasser had several political opponents. There were at least four traditional political forces in the country (the Wafd, the Brotherhood, the Communists and the Palace, not

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71. Lacouture, Transition, op. cit., p. 454, describes Nasser as "extremely intelligent...we should recall...the cunning with which he constantly played off Mahir against Farouk, hamstringing the Wafd, set the Moslem Brotherhood factions at each others' throats, not to mention the various brands of communism....No doubt all this can be put down to calculation."

Also note a particularly significant quote that Lacouture (Nasser, op. cit., p. 361) records Nasser as remarking to a Western journalist, "I shall tell you something which I have drawn from my own experience: at the summit, there is a perpetual struggle for power."





even considering the large landowners and the foreign interests), and Nasser himself had created another--the army.<sup>72</sup> Basic political strategy called for the neutralization of his political opponents and the establishment of a base of support which was loyal only to him. In retrospect, it seems obvious that Nasser used the tried and true techniques of appropriating the popular aspects of his opponents platform (which was facilitated by the fact that he had no stated ideology which might become contradicted), dividing his opponents by temporarily allying himself with first one and then another, while constantly working to undermine one's (non-allied) opponents. Continual patient repeating of this cycle tears at the fabric of the other's organization, while your own organization can be built up and developed owing nothing to any of the former organizations. The process appears to require a strong, authoritarian hand at the controls, a man with definite organizational/political goals (if only goals towards maintaining power), a man like Nasser.

In August, the Free Officers began calling for party reformation. As resistance to this anti-Wafd maneuver began to solidify, in early September Nasser removed the Wafdist cabinet (arresting nearly fifty supporters) and installed (ex) General Neguib as Prime Minister with his Minister of the Interior a dedicated anti-Wafdist. This frontal attack

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72. Although some authors note the venture of another colonel, Arabi, into politics as a result of his revolt of 1882, and regard that as a forerunner of the 1952 revolt, most authors are more inclined to regard that affair as making Nasser's job more difficult. For example, see Heyworth-Dunne, op. cit., p. 3--"His (Arabi's) badly advised military rising did a great deal of harm to the Egyptian cause for, as Professor Muhammad Rifast of the Higher Training College, Cairo, states, "No worse affliction can befall a nation than the officious meddling of its military authorities in national politics."

For another view, see Ahmed, op. cit., p. 53.





upon the Wafd party<sup>73</sup> was followed the very next day by the announcement of the Agrarian (Land) Reform Law.<sup>74</sup> The limiting of maximum acreages to 200 feddan (plus 50 per son for up to two sons) managed to effectively divert attention from the army's attack upon the Wafd and Communists, while satisfying an established social "cause." At the same time, the action eliminated the large landholders who were much of the basis of the political support of the Wafd and many of the other splinter political parties in the pre-revolt days.<sup>75</sup> Concurrently, land reform served to establish the Free Officer's legitimacy (was it just happenstance that the 200/300 feddan limitation fell between the Communist's proposed limit of 100 and the Brotherhood's and Wafd's limit of 500, or was it

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73. Wheelock, op. cit., p. 18, discusses the Wafd's recognition of the danger of political (and personal) extinction with which they were being threatened.

74. See footnote #37 for references which discuss the reform.

75. "Nasser's famous Land Reform Law primarily was a political rather than an economic reform. In one stroke, the law practically eliminated the class of Egyptian landowners who so long had ruled and abused the country....Many have ridiculed this law. But those who did so assumed that Nasser had issued the law to solve the problem of the landless peasantry...the help they received was somewhat incidental to the main purpose of the law, which was to destroy the power of feudalism." Vynn, op. cit., p. 75. The remainder of the quoted paragraph is important to later considerations of the importance of the Aswan Dam--"Leaders of the Revolution have never pretended that land distribution was the solution to rural landhunger. The only remedy to that disease, they insist, is to increase the cultivated land area of Egypt."



really all Gamal Salem's computations?).<sup>76</sup> Moving on the heels of these two blows, with the Wafd and their supporters in disarray, Nasser purged the army officer ranks of Wafdist supporters and installed military officers as observers in the governmental offices.<sup>77</sup> Thus by the end of September 1952, Nasser had eliminated the Wafd and the Communists as legitimate political contenders. He had struck crippling blows at their elements of support within Egypt, and he had appropriated their primary social reform issue--land reform.<sup>78</sup>

The Brotherhood was a more difficult opponent. Before mounting the anti-Wafd moves, Nasser had neutralized the Brotherhood by an invitation to join the Free Officers in the Cabinet, but the General Guide had subsequently rejected the offer and by the middle of October the Brother-

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76. Salem is given practically full credit by St. John, op. cit., p. 151.

James B. Mayfield subtitles his Rural Politics in Nasser's Egypt. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971) as "A Quest for Legitimacy" and notes that "one central theme of this study is the concept of political legitimization, the process of inculcating and deepening the belief among members of a society that the present political institutions, procedures and ideals 'are right, are good, and are appropriate.'" More explicitly, one might define the process of legitimization as the gradual development...of a deep and unambiguous sense of identity with the national government--its leaders, policies, institutions, and procedures ....The violent overthrow of established values and institutions creates a crisis of legitimacy in which neither the old nor the new is completely acceptable." p. 5.

77. See Wheelock, op. cit., p. 19.

78. Recall that the Wafd had used the distribution of land to mark (and legitimize) their return to power in 1950 (page thirty-three of this paper).



hood sympathizer had been eradicated from the Free Officers.<sup>79</sup> The campaign to eliminate the Brotherhood could not be undertaken lightly, however, and Nasser paused for a period of consolidation and flanking attempts. In January 1953, all political parties were abolished (recall that the Brotherhood were not a political party) and the Liberation Rally--"the school where the people will be taught how to elect their representatives properly"--was formed to establish a base of political support for the Free Officers. While the Brotherhood perceived this move as an attempt of Nasser to acquire legitimacy at the expense of the Brotherhood, Nasser's continued (if only superficial) obeisance to the Brotherhood was sufficient to limit anti-revolt action on the latter's part.

In April 1953, Nasser began negotiations with the British as to the status of the Canal (what would replace the abrogated treaty of 1936?), and I would suggest that he was aware that this issue was the critical one to the survival of his regime. While the British were pressing for a settlement and were insistent on maintaining a right of reentry to the Zone in the event of area aggression, and Nasser was interested in appropriating an additional section of the Egyptian political middle by establishing his firm claim as a nationalist (the most basic political question in Egyptian politics, as we have seen), the Brotherhood was

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79. For the Brotherhood's reasons for not becoming part of the Free Officer's cabinet, see Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 107ff. Reading of the literature leads one to think that the Brotherhood did not regard the Free Officers as real competitors on the Egyptian political scene and underestimated their power. For instance, Harris, op. cit., p. 202, notes that, "In retrospect, it is apparent that the Muslim Brotherhood misjudged the strength of the leaders of the Revolution...waited too long to offer their support..." Another view is that "the Brethren sought a Moslem state fulfilling all precepts of Moslem law and run by the new generation they were preparing. They did not consider the army officers competent to carry on this task." Husaini, op. cit., p. 131.





against even the very act of negotiation. Thus while Nasser did not feel strong enough to challenge the British while their soldiers occupied the Canal, the Canal question had united the out-of-power parties before (remember Black Saturday?), and Nasser knew he was going to have to settle the question short of the absolute nationalistic goals which were so popular in Egyptian politics. Not being able to eliminate the opposing team, Nasser was faced with eliminating the scorekeeper(s) in order to disguise his failure. It does not seem too out of place to picture Nasser as regarding the Canal negotiations as a ticking time bomb.

In June of 1953, Nasser felt strong enough to eliminate the nagging irritant of the Monarchy, and thus rid himself of the "Palace" as a legitimate participant in the political process, while simultaneously, the establishment of a Republic (with the Free Officers in control) gave Nasser's Egypt legitimacy on the international scene, a particularly valuable commodity to have in the negotiations with the British.<sup>80</sup>

The Egyptian Communist party was identified as the next weakest political group, and by August, arrests, torture, and detention of their members had begun. After several months of action against the Communists, Nasser moved against the Brotherhood. In October, feeling that the Liberation Rally had become dominated by the Brotherhood, Nasser established the National Guard to act as a counterweight and hopefully his source of support independent of the Army. This effort was foiled when the Brotherhood joined the Guard with the same enthusiasm they had

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80. Lacouture, Transition, op. cit., p. 171. "(T)here was a discrete royalist campaign being conducted in England by the former seventy-year-old 'Dauphin,' Prince Mohamed Ali, who went about saying that if Farouk was distasteful, not all the members of his family were without merit." Also see St. John, op. cit., p. 158.



joined the Rally.<sup>81</sup> In November, Nasser moved to put the weight of the regime behind one of the splinter elements of the Brotherhood to overthrow the General Guide.<sup>82</sup> The ignominious failure of this scheme due to the popular demand for Hodeiby's return as the Guide served to bring the split between the Brotherhood and Nasser out into the open and made open warfare practically inevitable.<sup>83</sup> The open break came in January, when, using a public incident that appears to have been staged,<sup>84</sup> and the charge (among others)<sup>85</sup> that the Brotherhood were negotiating with the British over the Canal behind the back of the government (a charge that very conveniently served to minimize the Brotherhood's main charge against Nasser), Nasser abolished the Moslem Brotherhood and arrested more than four hundred Brethren.<sup>86</sup> This proved to be a tactical error, for the Brotherhood and the Communists at last found common ground for a policy of anti-Nasserism, and their strength was not totally illusory. They would seize any opportunity to retaliate upon Nasser.

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81. Nasser's primary purpose in establishing the Guard may have been to put more pressure on the British to settle the Canal issue, instead of acting to neutralize the Brotherhood. For discussions of the reasons for the establishment, see Husaini, op. cit., p. 133; Mitchell, op. cit., p. 112; and Wheelock, op. cit., p. 28.

82. See Footnote #44 and Harris, op. cit., p. 187ff, for descriptions of the fractionalism which was basic to all discussions of the Brotherhood after the al-Banna assassination.

83. See Wheelock, op. cit., p. 28, and Mitchell, op. cit., p. 115.

84. When an army jeep broadcasting government propaganda interrupted Moslem ceremonies at the University of Cairo. For one description, see Mitchell, op. cit., p. 126, for another see Harris, op. cit., p. 216.

85. See Harris, op. cit., p. 217, for a summary of all the governmental charges against the Brotherhood.

86. For the explanation that Nasser had started propaganda to identify the regime with religion all the way back in April, and had been anxious to destroy the Brotherhood earlier, but couldn't convince the rest of the Free Officers at that time, see Wheelock, op. cit., p. 28.



In the still fluid caldron of Egyptian politics, the item in most ample supply was provocation and situational opportunity. Within six weeks, disagreements within the Free Officers resulted in General Neguib's bloodless coup. Nasser's worst fears had been realized. The army support, his only claim to legitimate rule, had disintegrated before he was able to build up another prop. In addition, Nasser had not yet completed the destruction of the other Egyptian political parties (not all levels of the government had yet been purged of their sympathizers). Thus there were civilian structures readily available with already established cadres who were only too anxious to arrange for the organization of demonstrations against the regime. The Brotherhood, the Wafd and the Communists seized upon the occasion offered by the military disarray to vocalize their complaints against Nasser.<sup>87</sup> Neguib's coup was a complete success.

Unfortunately for Neguib (and his temporary allies), they did not possess the political or conspiratory talents of Nasser. Nasser, although shaken by the realization of his worst fears, immediately began working to form a coalition of forces.<sup>88</sup> He was permitted to retain the Prime Ministry for two weeks, and he used the time wisely, moving to transfer the army (and Free) officers who had shown their "true" colors. Concurrently, he revamped the cabinet to gain control of the trade unions,

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87. While Nasser was certainly interested later in proving a relationship between Neguib and the Brotherhood, it appears more as if all of Nasser's enemies seized the opportunity of the other's ire to ally themselves in an informal (non-conspirator) relationship.

88. See Wynn, op. cit., p. 100ff and Little, Egypt, op. cit., p. 234.





while trusted army officers were infiltrated and integrated into the unions, particularly the Cairo Transport Union. Nasser had finally found an independent base for support.<sup>89</sup>

After he was forced to give up the posts of Prime Minister and President of the RCC, Nasser turned his efforts to making peace with the Brotherhood, an effort that proved that the Brotherhood (or at least the General Guide), was easy prey. This peace-making also effectively split the Communists from the Brotherhood, for by organizing the selective relegalization of the Brotherhood and not the Communists, the latter were effectively isolated. Concurrently, Nasser refocused his not inconsiderable charismatic skills back upon the army,<sup>90</sup> and succeeded in cutting Neguib (who was really the "reactor") away from the only base of his own support.

Within four weeks Nasser was ready. His counter-coup was well-orchestrated, brilliantly conceived, and completely effective. With the Brotherhood largely neutralized and the labor unions organized, the streets of Cairo belonged to Nasser. With the opposition either converted or eliminated from the barracks, so did the army.

Nasser had lost ground in his drive to eliminate the Brotherhood, but he had purged the army and solidified his hold there for a while.

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89. See St. John, op. cit., p. 172; Wynn, op. cit., p. 101; Lacouture, Transition, op. cit., p. 186; or Wheelock, op. cit., p. 3/4. At the same time, Wheelock presents an interesting point on p. 72 which may explain some of the problems Nasser has had in developing a political base. Perhaps he subconsciously "fears the development of a political force which ultimately might challenge his authority."

90. "Nasser sought only to gather the army around him by playing on a sort of class consciousness and flattering the officers' corporatist spirit. What were you before? Nothing. What have you become, what could you become again? Everything. Do you wish to fall back into the shame of the past, ill-commanded, ill-paid, forgotten, despised?" Lacouture, Nasser, op. cit., p. 136.





The closeness of the affair must have had an effect, for while Nasser continued his harassment of the Brotherhood, no overt attempt was made to physically eliminate it, despite the ever nearer date of agreement on the Canal. One feasible explanation for this may be that Nasser adopted a change of tactics. With the weakness of the Moslem Brotherhood leadership,<sup>91</sup> perhaps it was possible to peacefully appropriate the political issues for which the Brotherhood stood (with the obvious exception of the "no negotiations" one). Accordingly, Nasser made the Pilgrimage in August and attended a meeting of Muslim leaders in Mecca.<sup>92</sup> His hopes of appeasement were in vain. The "heads of agreement" statement on the Canal had been floated on 27 July to test the water, and the Brotherhood had reacted as had been expected. The battle was joined.

Nasser reacted by giving the secret police full freedom, from censorship of sermons,<sup>93</sup> to fabrication of press stories, arrests on all pretenses, and the loosening of the National Guard onto the mosques. The Brotherhood reacted by moving to coordinate with the remnants of the Wafd and the Communists. Before the announcement on 19 October of the

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91. The General Guide was so anxious not to provide Nasser with a provocative incident that he had left the country and either remained out or stayed in hiding for the critical months of the Autumn.

92. See Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 137 and 143.

93. Al-Banna had earlier learned the effectiveness of lecturing from the pulpit. The success of their tactics would seem to attribute some validity to the concept that "the Fellahin can be induced to act, to revolt, and to destroy when their struggle is equated with a jihad (holy war). Motivation still seems to be dressed in religious garb and active participation appears to require a foreign infidel (non-Muslim) enemy." Mayfield, op. cit., p. 55. Nasser's attack on the Brotherhood's use of the tactic received worldwide attention (through Time magazine reports). Mitchel, op. cit., p. 140. Nasser has himself expropriated this technique. "The Friday Sermon, a traditional institution whether in mosques or on the radio, has become since 1955 a didactic technique as well as a vehicle for the expression of 'revolutionary' policy." Vatikiotis, op. cit., p. 198.



signing of the new Canal agreement, Nasser's penetration into the Brotherhood (in which he was trying to use the same technique (that had previously failed) of supporting one group against the General Guide), succeeded in throwing the Brotherhood into internal confusion and resulted in the complete splintering of the Brethren into at least three separate groups.<sup>94</sup>

While Nasser had succeeded by his splintering tactics in preventing the Brotherhood from "striking while the iron was hot" with respect to the fire of the Canal agreement, he had also removed the restraining control of the General Guide from the Brotherhood, and a week after the announcement of the Treaty, the famous assassination attempt was made.<sup>95</sup> Nasser quickly called on the transport union for street support, the security police for their normal best efforts, and then moved ruthlessly to at last crush this final competing political actor.<sup>96</sup>

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Nasser was now in the position to appropriate the entire Egyptian political middle. He had already seized the issue of land reform. He had at least won some laurels (as a nationalist) with respect to the Canal. Now was the opportunity to seize the pan-Moslem/Arab mantle as well.

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94. See Mitchell, op. cit., p. 148ff, for the best discussion of this period.

95. Only a note on the accuracy of reported history. Although the event was witnessed by many reporters, broadcast nationwide, and recorded, it is difficult to find two writers who even closely agree as to either Nasser's actions or words immediately following the attempt.

96. The trials, etc., are covered in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 151ff. The resurgence capability of the Brotherhood (demonstrating their mass and ideological appeal) is seen by the fact that Nasser felt it necessary to repeatedly purge the Brotherhood in order to control it. For a description of some of Nasser's continued problems with the Brotherhood, even after the massive purges of 1954-5, see Elie Kedourie, "Anti-Marxism in Egypt," M. Confino, op. cit., pp. 321-333.



No sooner must the opportunity have been reeognized (the Brotherhood trials were completed in February 1955), then the Baghdad Pact (by allying Iraq with the West) blatantly put the lie to Nasser's elaim to be able to rally the Arab Middle East in a pan-anything movement.<sup>97</sup> On top of this domestic setback, Israel's demonstration of the military earability to operate unchecked against Egyptian "strongpoints" served to rekindle diseontentment in the army.<sup>98</sup> The Bandung conference offered the first opportunity to regain the lost ground.

It seems appropriate to recall at this point in history, when it appeared that Nasser had successfully withstood the challenges of all the opposing facets of Egyptian politics, that Nasser still had not caught the spirit of Egyptian popular nationalism--the anti-West, no-compromise spirit that had sustained the Brotherhood movement (and the sympathys of the citizenry) throughout an extended period of unrelenting opposition and persecution. Thus, until Nasser succeeded in widening his own political base, while there was not any large amount of organized opposition (after 1954) against him, there did not have to be a large-scale effort to be dangerous to him. A revolt on the order of the one

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97. "The Nasser movement...aspired to create a strong and independent Ecynt that would lead to the renaissance of the Arab world and eventually of Islam; it firmly bclieved that the emancipation of the whole region from Western dominance was the first task and that the Baghdad Pact was a retrogressive step..." Tom Little, Egypt. (New York: Praeger, 1958), p. 261.

For another comment which recognizes that Nasser's foreign interests were guided by domestic concerns--"From 1954 through the end of the Suez Crisis...Nasser was primarily concerned with the domestic security of his regime of modern revolution. If he were to hold power and have the support of the more radical military, he had to avoid political and military entanglements with the West..." Leonard Binder, The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East. (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 236.

98. "The Gaza attacks led to the one thing Nasser always had feared most--trouble inside his army. Recalling the fate of King Farouk, many officers frankly threatened an anti-Nasser coup unless sufficient arms were forthcoming to cope with Israel." Wynn, op. cit., p. 116.





of 1952 would probably have been sufficient to remove the Free Officers just as easily as they had the King. Nasser's continued unpopularity with the people (read as "continued failure to obtain political legitimacy") is striking throughout the 1952-56 era. As an example of the tenor of the reports, one recalls Wheelock's description of Nasser's drive to the sight of his "Army Day" (Canal nationalization) speech--"a small mongrel dog, running bewilderedly beside his large limousine, received more applause from the crowd than did he."<sup>99</sup> If Nasser had failed to establish no more enthusiasm than this in more than two years of negligible opposition and absolute censorship, does one think that those two years were easy?

The answer is no. While the subduing of the political opposition had proven feasible, their replacement was much more difficult because the regime was not only responsible for what they said/promised, they were also responsible to the people for events. The Brotherhood had been able to avoid that responsibility (of failure) by remaining out of the government. Nasser was not able to adopt that tactic. Thus, while the Bandung conference enabled Nasser to appear as a true neutralist (and, even better, with perhaps Eastern leanings) in this first Asian-African conference, and the result in Egypt was encouraging,<sup>100</sup> the anticipated failures in the Sudan which became evident in the late summer were much more serious. The Sudan issue and the Canal issue had

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99. Wheelock, op. cit., p. 57.

100. The basis for the Egyptian hatred of the West is ingrained in the historic East-West conflict which took place in the Middle East, and the basic religious reasons detailed previously. In addition, is the old charge of Western imperialism and another aspect detailed by Heyworth-Dunne, op. cit., p. v. "There is a natural dislike of the West because the Arabic Press, controlled by capitalists, politicians, and vested interests, tends to blame the West for all the difficulties and problems of modern life in order to remove the onus from themselves."



been historically linked in Egyptian minds<sup>101</sup> and a perceived loss (to the British) in the Sudan more than negated any perceived gain with respect to the Canal. Can one postulate that Nasser, when considering how best to counter the serious loss of domestic political power due to Western sponsored setbacks in the Arab world (the Baghdad pact primarily, but also the Gaza Raid), and setbacks in Egypt's "own territory" (Sudan), was convinced of the necessity for dramatically demonstrating his independence from and disregard of, Western policy. Did not this motivation have a strong voice in his decision to seek (in May) and accept (in September) non-Western (Russian) arms?

It seems at least possible that the answer to this question is yes. It also seems definite that the results were electrifyingly successful in accomplishing these ends, no matter what the intentions were.<sup>102</sup> In addition, this explanation, (with emphasis on the practical demonstration to Nasser of the political rewards ripe for reaping by anyone willing to tweak the West's nose), provides apparent insight into Nasser's reasons

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101. Tom Little (Nasser, op. cit., p. 238) notes that Nasser's decision to abandon Egypt's claim to the Sudan in order to gain the 1954 treaty with England "was a courageous decision, for the people of Egypt had been taught by decades of propaganda to believe that 'unity of the Nile valley' was a fact welcomed by the Sudanese themselves."

For another discussion of how critical the Sudanese issue was to Egyptian internal politics, see Humphrey Trevelyan, The Middle East in Revolution. (Boston: Gambit, 1970), Chapter 2.

102. "Nasser now carried the crowd with him. He had touched a deep chord in the Egyptian masses, in their dislike of the West....We must not forget that the Colonel did not invent this solution, but was only carrying out what the Wafd had already thought of doing in 1951, and that two days before the burning of Cairo, on the 24th of January 1952, the newspaper Ahram announced that Egypt was going to try to buy arms from Moscow." Lacouture, Transition, op. cit., p. 227.

For a more detailed description of the reaction of the street crowds, see Wynn, op. cit., p. 120.

Cremeans says flatly "Nasser's foreign policy became particularly popular with the Egyptian masses only when he started attacking the West." Charles D. Cremeans, The Arabs and the World. (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 300.



for the recognition of Red China in May 1956. The latter event is particularly significant because so many observers have found difficulty in attempting to explain why Nasser conducted this particular act in the face of its almost certain ramifications with respect to American Congressional consideration of the High Dam aid.<sup>103</sup>

With the setback in the Sudan and in the Muslim world, it is of interest to evaluate the success of the "revolution" in other areas. Nasser's first and most popular effort (prior to the arms deal with the East) was his land reform measure. But as we have noted before, these measures were not suitable or intended to be of real economic benefit to the country.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, there were only so many royal and confiscated feddans to give away. By 1956, the end was in sight. The Agrarian Reform officials no longer released figures on the amount of land which had been given away to the landless, the Liberation Province project was moving much more slowly than anticipated (and would shortly prove to be a scandalous public failure resulting in another political crisis for Nasser), and other land reclamation projects were doing at least as poorly.<sup>105</sup> In 1956, the High Dam project was the only land reform project that still possessed political credibility and promise. Nasser implicitly had recognized this as early as January 1955, when he personally (and publically) discussed the High Dam as "the principal project"

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103. For a British view of the extreme counterproductiveness of this decision, see Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 34.

104. See footnote #75. Also see Issawi, op. cit., pp. 162ff and Wheelock, op. cit., p. 80ff for an analysis of the situation after 1954.

105. Wheelock, op. cit., p. 94ff and Issawi, op. cit., p. 131ff.





in her "clear-cut policy for rebuilding the country on new foundations."<sup>106</sup> Ground had been broken in June of the previous year. The most prominent<sup>107</sup> and successful demonstration of Nasser's social reform was well on track.

One can picture Nasser regarding the summer of 1956 as the period of consolidation of his political position in Egypt. He was finally going to achieve political legitimacy. The first general election (referendum since Nasser was the only candidate) since 1949 was going to be held in Egypt in June 1956. Not purely by chance, the Canal agreement of 1954 called for the last British troops to be out of the zone five days before the election. Thus Nasser was seizing the moment in which he could most validly claim credit for furtherance of the Nationalistic (anti-British) political goals, as the best moment in which to call for legitimizing elections. Does it seem too remote to suppose that his May recognition of Red China, another tangible demonstration of his freedom from (and disregard for) western policy, was not part of the same "stretch drive" effort to increase his popularity within the country?

On 23 June 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser was elected President of Egypt for six years and his Constitution was approved. Nasser received 99.9 per cent of the vote.

What was the effect of the American and British 26 July refusal to fund the Dam upon this carefully wrought condition of political acceptance?

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106. Gamal Abdel Nasser, "The Egyptian Revolution," Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Middle East. Jacob M. Landau (ed.) (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 42. This is a reprint of an article that appeared in Foreign Affairs in January 1955.

107. "(D)ragomen conducting tourists up the Nile pointed to an emphatic white line drawn vertically on each bank of the river at the Aswan cataract, remarking that a mountain of a dam would soon be built there. Nasser had ordered the painting of these lines so that popular imagination could etch in the greatness he now thought certain to come." Little, High Dam, op. cit., p. 44.





Let me review the situation. There were two critical aspects of Egyptian politics. The first and most important was nationalism. Political nationalism required an anti-West foreign policy, both as an extension of the Middle East's age old history of East-West conflict, as a reflection of the desire of the Muslim world to regain their position of ascendancy over the West, and as a reaction to the recent history of Western (French and British) hegemony and imperialism in Egypt. Nasser had moved to capture this feeling by succeeding in gaining the removal of British troops from Egyptian soil, but had been forced to accept the presence of British technicians and the right of the British to reenter the area. That had been at best only a partial victory, and Nasser's failure to achieve total victory had nearly cost him his regime. In partial compensation, Nasser had moved to establish his freedom from Western influence in the field of foreign affairs, and after some initial setbacks, had made great strides in that area. Unfortunately, Nasser had played nearly all his "foreign policy cards" due to the necessity to counter the Sudan setback and to achieve convincing popular election results.

The second critical aspect of Egyptian politics was land reform. If the purpose of the revolution was social reform, and if social reform consisted of land reclamation and distribution, and if there were no longer the promise of further land reclamation and distribution--what was the need of the revolution? Land reform was the initial and most stable foundation of political support for the Free Officers. If this foundation were to crumble, could the revolution be shored up?

My impression is that Nasser understood the situation as it is presented here. Perhaps not in these cold words, but in the emotions and practical political facts that would produce the same ends. Given this problem, I feel he made an evaluation similar to the following.



The regime cannot survive the disappointment of an obvious failure and halt in the land reform program. The only available monies (which are not already mortgaged for arms) are those of the Canal revenues. There is no additional action that can be taken to further align Egypt with the East which is feasible to accomplish in a short period,<sup>108</sup> and it is necessary to react now to this attack upon my political legitimacy.<sup>109</sup> The only feasible action I can take is to nationalize the Canal, both for its revenues,<sup>110</sup> and, equally important, to maintain my newly-acquired political legitimacy.

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108. The evidence indicates that Russia was not prepared to fund the Dam at this point. In addition, Egypt had already shifted her arms purchases to the East and recognized Red China. Besides all this, the Eastern Bloc had more Egyptian cotton than they could use.

109. Probably one of the more telling conversations is the one reported by Heikal when he relates how Nasser found out about the withdrawal of American aid for the Dam. As Nasser and Nehru flew into Cairo, "Nasser's Air Force aide-de-camp came back from the cockpit with a radio message. It was a resume of Dulles' statement. The President read it, excused himself to Nehru without telling him what was in the message, then brought it back to show Dr. Fawzi and myself.

"This is not a withdrawal," he said, "It is an attack on the regime and an invitation to the people of Egypt to bring it down." (op. cit., p. 68).

110. A proposition which is not completely invalid on the surface, for although the Canal revenues could never pay for the Aswan Dam as planned, they could pay for a lesser dam, or could pay part of the costs of a longer term plan, or charges could be raised, or maybe Nasser didn't really know what the realized fiscal amount from the Canal would be, as is implied by his speech. (When he said, "The Canal will pay for the dam!" as reported in Heikal, op. cit., p. 170.). One thing for sure, any additional foreign exchange could be put to good use considering Egypt's fiscal situation. "During the first seven months of 1956, Egypt's national debt rose by almost a third--from 218.6 to 280.3 million pounds." Wheelock, op. cit., p. 147.



Given my description of events in Egypt from about 1919 to mid-1956,<sup>111</sup> it seems feasible to draw some conclusions. The first is that Nasser did not spring from the Egyptian mass with unique and new ideological views, but that conclusion is rather moot since only the most biased (or indiscriminatory) authors leave such an impression. The second conclusion is that it seems possible to draw at least a tentative inference that practically all of Nasser's actions within his first four years of power were primarily the result of the bureaucratic pressures of Egyptian politics and society. It seems possible to picture Nasser, for the first two years of his regime, as working against an impending deadline--the point at which he could no longer stall the British and (more importantly) the Egyptian public--the point at which he had to produce an alternative to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. Since Nasser knew that any (internationally) feasible alternative was bound to be disapproved by the corporate political bodies, and would serve them as a unifying theme, to the ultimate detriment of Nasser's own political ambitions, it was necessary for Nasser to either destroy or neutralize all Egyptian political parties before reaching agreement on the Canal. To accomplish this goal, it was necessary for Nasser to appropriate the middle ground of nationalism, social reform, pan-Arabism, etc., from the existing political groups. Thus Nasser's ideology developed from the ideology of his strongest political competitors which in most cases were the Muslim Brotherhood.

Similarly, an examination of the period of 1954 to mid-1956 suggests that it is possible to completely avoid the question of whether Nasser

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111. One interesting result of this paper was that I developed a very different chronology than did Kenneth Love. I submit that this is primarily because of the difference in our consideration of macro-microinternational theory versus Egyptian-microtheory.





did or did not use "foreign adventures" to distract the people from domestic failures, for the "foreign policy" questions as to the status of the Canal, the Dam and the Arab-Islamic movement were in fact critical aspects of Egyptian domestic politics.

In summation, it seems feasible to postulate that in addition to the macrotheoretical and the microtheoretical explanation of the causes of the Suez Crisis of 1956, there is a great deal of room for a combination bureaucratic-organizational model that just deals with Egyptian internal politics, and results in at least a facile explanation of events. This theory would approach Nasser as a product of the social forces of the Egyptian times. It would postulate that Nasser was much more a prisoner of those forces than he was an original actor on the international scene whose ideals and actions were viewed with awe by his fellow citizens. This explanation would lean heavily upon the historic development of the Egyptian political ideology and would picture Nasser as a leader who was racing to establish his own political legitimacy before he was deposed by the very same disruptive forces which had enabled him to initially rise to power. The explanation might conclude that the Nationalization of the Canal, (I would suggest that whether or not that was the cause of the Suez Crisis is more appropriately a question for evaluation in the context of British and French, but particularly Israeli bureaucratic politics) was inevitable, no matter what the actions were of the United States with respect to the Dam aid. A reservation to this last conclusion would be that it appears that the United States decision on the Dam made the nationalization inevitable at that particular time period. The interesting point that can be drawn is that the "common" conclusion of the man in the street, that Nasser nationalized the Canal because of United States refusal to support the Dam, is



correct. One wonders, however, if it is not correct for the wrong reasons, and whether or not this might not be a common occurrence in the field of foreign policy.

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In addition to the conclusions which can be drawn directly from this examination of this critical era in Egyptian politics, there are two more which are suggested by my readings in this area. The first is, with respect to Dulles' reported hesitancy about supplying the Dam aid due to the necessity to continue harmonious relations with Egypt for a period of at least ten years, and the unlikelihood of that close (and the inevitable and perhaps necessary superior actor position of the United States as the supplier of funds) relationship producing anything but resentment on the part of the Egyptians.<sup>112</sup> If that interpretation of his position is correct, and if that were a deciding factor in Dulles' decision, Dulles' role with respect to this entire question deserves a bit more respect. It seems apparent that in this situation, in that Egypt had an intense negative reaction to the West and to foreigners in general, Dulles may well have been correct in his evaluation. With respect to the lesson one might draw from this evaluation, perhaps the specific one for Egyptian-American relations is that, particularly considering Egypt's political history and culture, Robert Frost's dictum about neighborly relations should be followed.

In a more general vein, a tentative conclusion from my readings of the situation that existed in Egypt up to 1956 is that nothing can replace knowledge of the culture and history of a country, its religion(s), politics, and leaders, for usefulness in predicting its probable courses

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<sup>112</sup>. Reasoning that Dulles provided in his press conference on 2 April 1957 as reported by Love, op. cit., p. 326.



of future actions and explaining or understanding its past actions. One of the principal implications this may hold is that nations which inhibit the free and open reporting and investigating of information (as did Nasser, particularly during the revolt years of 1952-54) are acting contrary to the interests of world peace, for they are in effect attempting to prevent an accurate assessment of their dreams and fears, a situation which seemingly cannot fail to inevitably result in international tension.



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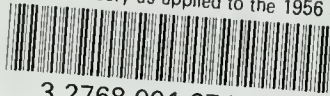
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